



# Decision Memo

## Headwaters of the South Fork Trinity River Restoration Project:

Portions of: S1T26N, R11W; S30&31 T27N, R10W;  
and S35&36 T27N, R11W; Mt. Diablo Meridian

Shasta-Trinity National Forest  
South Fork Management Unit  
Trinity County, California

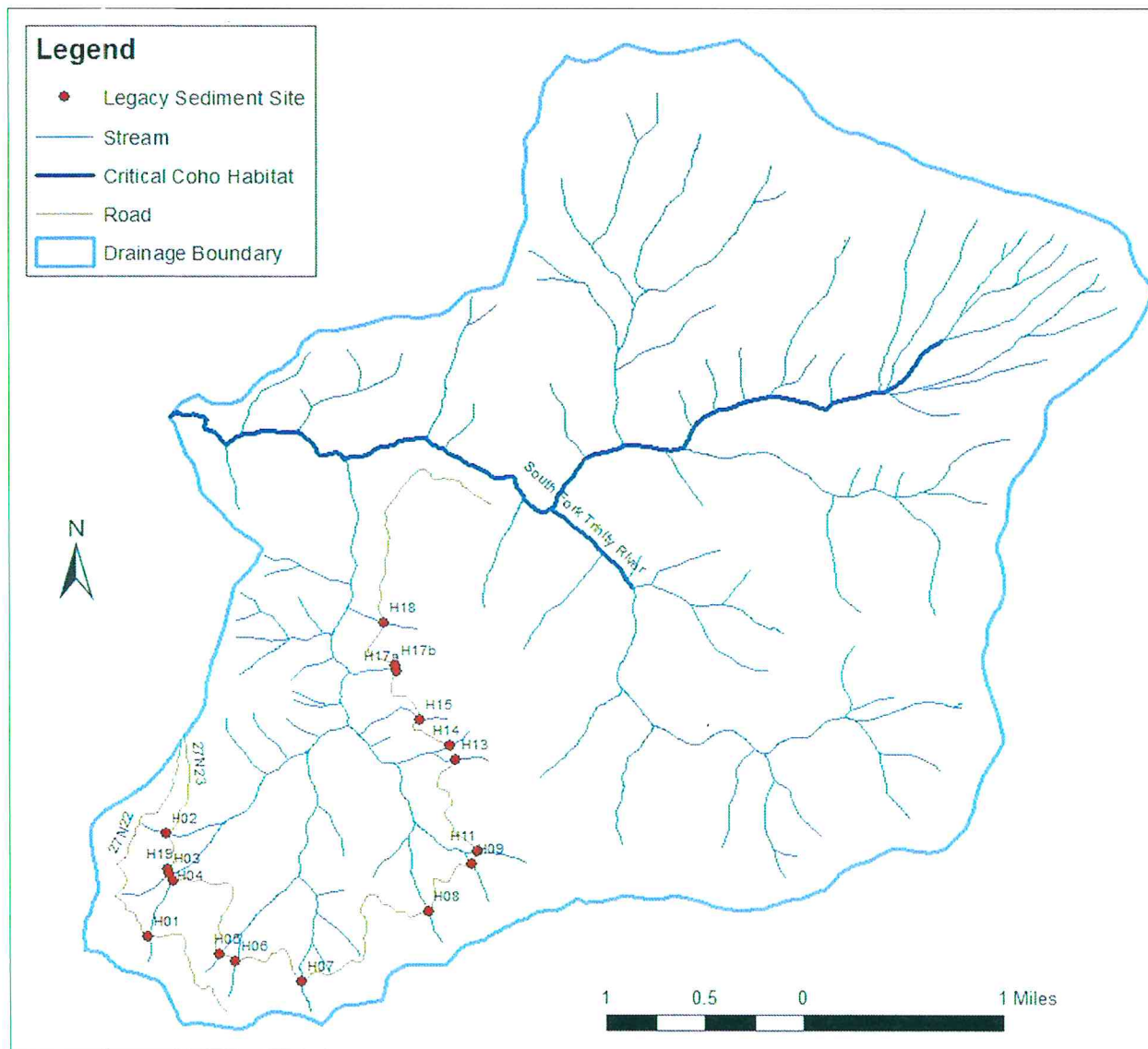
### DECISION

I have decided to reconstruct seventeen road/stream crossings on roads 27N22 and 27N23 as described in the final legacy sediment site treatment plan to reduce sediment in the headwaters of the South Fork Trinity River. This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18), which pertains to restoring streams by replacing culverts to restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable. This category of action(s) is applicable because the project is intended to address the sediment impairment of the drainage by replacing culverts that are not designed to pass the flow of a 100 year flood.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist.

### **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species**

Federally listed threatened fish species and critical habitat that could potentially be affected by project activities include, Threatened Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts (SONCC) Coho Salmon and SONCC critical habitat. Forest Service sensitive fish species that could potentially be affected by project activities include Upper Trinity River (UTR) Chinook Salmon-Fall Run, Klamath Mountain Province (KMP) Steelhead, and Pacific Lamprey. The locations of the culvert upgrade or replacement sites along USFS roads 27N22 and 27N23 are more than one mile away from the closest extent of SONCC coho salmon Critical Habitat (CH), EFH, USFS Sensitive fish species and/or habitat except for possibly Pacific Lamprey, and all but one MIS fish species and/or habitat (rainbow trout). The culvert replacement sites are therefore not in close enough proximity to the nearest anadromous fish or fish habitats to conceivably do any direct or even indirect harm based on the magnitude of the culvert replacement work and the distances involved except possibly for Pacific lamprey.



**Figure 1. Map of project area.**

There is effectively zero probability that any site-specific work can directly or indirectly affect any anadromous fish or habitats. If rainbow trout are present in Mule Gulch today, there should be no harm or mortality caused by the culvert replacement project following the direction found in the Stream Crossing Upgrade Guide. Additionally, other project-related Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Resource Protection Measures (RPMs) will become part of any project related contracts which will further decrease any probability of project-related sedimentation from occurring. The estimate of fill volume for all 17 culvert locations combined equates to roughly 51,000 cubic yards, all of it fine grained material detrimental to aquatic organisms and their habitats. The beneficial effects of this proposed action discount any possible minor impact that culvert replacement implementation may present. Construction of critical dips and rolling dips would contribute zero to negligible quantities of sediment to any nearby stream courses directly, and very small quantities of sediment to adjacent streams indirectly during the first few years after Project completion. The installation of these rolling or critical dips can help prevent catastrophic stream diversions from occurring atop road surfaces. The potential effects to habitat indicators will all be neutral for the short term installations, and net positive for sediment-related issues once completed. The project will have no effect to coho salmon or coho salmon critical habitat.

Terrestrial wildlife species that could be potentially affected by project activities include the federally listed northern spotted owl (NSO) and several Forest Service Sensitive wildlife species. To avoid disturbance that could potentially affect

---

reproductive success, a limited operating period (LOP) as described in Appendix C of the project wildlife report will be imposed to ban activities that would cause loud and continuous noise disturbance during the NSO breeding season. Suitable habitat is present adjacent to some of the structures to be removed or installed. However, these structures are all in disturbed areas that do not support NSO habitat, and project activities are not expected to have any meaningfully measurable effect on NSO habitat suitability at or near any of the proposed work sites. The project area is not within currently designated Critical Habitat for the northern spotted owl, and the proposed action will have no effect on designated Critical Habitat for this species.

Forest Service Sensitive wildlife species are listed in Appendix B of the project wildlife report. The project work sites are in existing road beds, which are highly disturbed areas with limited value to any Forest Service Sensitive wildlife species. The NSO LOP will also substantially reduce the potential disturbance to these species. Localized and short-term effects to riparian habitats may occur during work periods. However, the project will restore riparian habitats and enhance riparian functions, and will thus benefit the Forest Service Sensitive wildlife species that rely on these habitats. As a result of these factors, project activities will not cause a trend toward federal listing for any Forest Service Sensitive species. Pertaining to wildlife, there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed activities.

No sensitive plant species were found, although there is potential habitat for mountain lady's slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*) and moonworts (*Botrychium spp.*).

## **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds**

Wetlands in the project area include the streams and the extent of the riparian vegetation. This project will disturb soil in the immediate vicinity of the crossings being upgraded. BMPs will be implemented to minimize the delivery of sediment to the water courses and a minimum amount of small trees and vegetation will have to be removed to facilitate the work. This project will have a negligible immediate effect on the wetlands and this will quickly recover and improve the condition of the streams and wetlands as erosion is minimized, less sediment enters the streams, and catastrophic crossing failure potential is mostly eliminated.

Floodplains in the project area are relatively narrow due to the steep terrain and extend up the walls to the level of the 100 year flows. The floodplains will be minimally affected and will recover to better than pre-project condition.

Municipal water supply is a beneficial use of water in this area. Work will be done most likely at low or no flow conditions and BMPs will be implemented to minimize sediment delivery. Any effect on the water quality standards of this beneficial use will be immeasurable.

The mere presence of these resource conditions does not preclude the use of a categorical exclusion as there is negligible potential effect on these resource conditions that may result from the proposed action. The proposed action is designed to have a positive effect on sediment delivery potential to the watercourses and, thus, a negligible effect on these resource conditions. There are no extraordinary circumstances that require further analysis.

The sediment total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the South Fork Trinity River (EPA, 1998) requires monitoring to show progress toward attainment of applicable water quality standards for sediment. Monitoring identified for demonstrating progress toward restoration of the Headwaters drainage is identified in the hydrologist report.

## **Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas, Inventoried Roadless Areas or potential wilderness areas, or Research Natural Areas**

There are no congressionally designated areas, inventoried roadless areas, potential wilderness areas, or research natural areas present in the project area.

---

## American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites

The Redding Rancheria (federally recognized) was sent a tribal consultation letter; and the non-federally recognized Lassic Band and Nor Rel Muk Wintu Tribe were sent a letter inviting them to take part in the Section 106 process. Mr. John Elgin, Chairman of the Lassic Band, inspected the stream crossings in the field and stated that the Lassic Band has no objection to the project.

## Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas

Pursuant to the Programmatic Agreement among the U.S.D.A Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), California State Historic Preservation Officer, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Processes for Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Management of Historic Properties by the National Forests of the Pacific Southwest Region (PA), the archeologist certified that the project is a screened undertaking under terms of the PA (Stipulation 7.2, Appendix D 2.0 – Screened Undertakings) and can be implemented without further review.

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the following management direction, standards, and guidelines that apply to this project:

- Manage the Forests' transportation system to facilitate resource management activities, protect wildlife, meet water quality objectives, and provide recreational access (Forest Plan, 4-4).
- Improve water quality to meet fish habitat requirements and domestic use needs (Forest Plan, 4-6).
- Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for protection of improvement of water quality (Forest Plan, 4-25). Required BMPs are identified in the final *Stream Crossing Upgrade Guide for NEPA projects on the West Side of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest*.
- Existing culverts determined to pose a substantial risk to riparian conditions will be improved, to accommodate at least the 100-year flood, including associated bedload and debris. Priority for upgrading will be based on the potential impact and the ecological value of the riparian resources affected. Crossings will be constructed and maintained to prevent diversion of streamflow out of the channel and down the road in the event of crossing failure (Forest Plan, 4-55).
- Key Watersheds are highest priority for watershed restoration (Forest Plan, 4-59).

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in October 2018 and was updated periodically during the analysis. A scoping letter dated August 24, 2018 was sent to individuals or organizations who have expressed interest in projects on the South Fork Management Unit. A notice was published in the Trinity Journal on August 29, 2018. Three comment letters were received in response to the project scoping proposal. Karen Wilson and Raymond Patton sent letters of support. Denise Boggs of Conservation Congress sent a letter with comments regarding the presence of fish species and the disclosure of any other activities in the watershed. These comments are addressed in the project reports, specifically the fisheries and hydrology reports. Maggie Robinson of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board visited the proposed project area on August 30, 2018 and recommended that three of the culverts be replaced with rock armored dips instead of larger culverts. These recommendations were incorporated into the project.

## IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This project may begin 30 days from the date of my signature.

---

## CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact David Schmerge, SFMU hydrologist, at 530-628-1222 or dlschmerge@fs.fed.us.



**Thomas Hall**  
District Ranger

4/11/19

Date

## REFERENCES

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9. 1998. South Fork Trinity River and Hayfork Creek sediment total maximum daily loads.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or familial status, {Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs,} Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center 202-720-2600 {Voice and TDD}.

To file a complaint alleging discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at:

<https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>, OR at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

**Mail:**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-9410

**Fax:** (202) 690-7442 or

**Email:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

